

FRANCE FACES PRIVATE ARMY SHAKE-UP

CPYRGHT By ALEX MACMILLAN in Paris

WHETHER it is M. Poher or M. Pompidou who triumphs in next month's Presidential election in France, one thing is certain; there will be a major shakeup in the organisation of the Government.

Both the former Prime Minister and the interim President want to end the present confusion and disputes between the various government agencies. Nowhere is this more necessary than in the domain of security and intelligence.

The split between the Elysée and the Quai d'Orsay are not only in the formulation but also in the implementation of foreign policy. This has long been a disruptive factor in France's relations abroad.

Although many people believe that these reforms will see the end of the "private armies" of senior Government officials, there are signs that under M. Pompidou they would continue to exist—but under his personal control.

He is known to have been worried by the power exerted by senior officials towards the end of Gen. de Gaulle's 10-year reign. Among these is M. Jacques Foccart, officially the Presidential Secretary-General for African and Malagasy Affairs.

In fact he had interests well outside his department. Responsible only to President de Gaulle, he interested himself in the Nigerian civil war, the Belgian linguistic struggle, the Quebec question and the Middle East.

Files taken

With his own sources of income, he played a role not dissimilar to that of Mr. Alan Dulles, the former head of the Central Intelligence Agency. Quite often, his plans and actions were in direct conflict with those of the Foreign Ministry.

It was he, the day after the referendum, who took a vanload of documents and files from the Elysée to General de Gaulle's home at Colombey-les-deux Eglises.

M. Foccart is also the guiding force behind one of the two semi-secret Gaullist organisations: "Service pour Action Civique". The S.A.C., which has members all over France, many with licensed small arms, made a last desperate attempt to keep Gen. de Gaulle in power on the night of the referendum.

With the other Gaullist "secret army", the "Comité pour la défense de France de la République", they organised large numbers of demonstrators who were going to create widespread public disturbance in Paris when the results were known.

Police action

However, M. Poher, the interim President, was already aware of this. And so the few demonstrators who arrived in Paris were welcomed by the police when they began to assemble in the Rue des Ecoles next to the Sorbonne in the students quarter.

More than 700 were arrested. It was initially thought that they were left-wing students.

The police soon, however, discovered that they were in fact members of the S.A.C. and C.D.R. A high proportion of them had black or red flags in their pockets and some crowbars to lift paving stones.

When their identities were checked it was found that none of them was enrolled in any university or college. M. Poher told the police and the Government that he was deeply shocked at this unconstitutional attempt to nullify the results of the referendum.

This is one of the fundamental reasons behind the increasing coolness between M. Poher and the Government.

The interim President's announcement that from now on the O.R.T.F., France's nationalised radio and television service, would be totally independent, further annoyed the Government.

M. Marcellin, Minister of the Interior, returned fire with an announcement that the police

who had become eligible to vote since February would not be enfranchised before the Presidential election.

This enraged, M. Poher, who, as President of the Senate, whipped the extension of the franchise through the Senate. It is now awaiting final reading in the National Assembly.

In a rather petty manner, the Ministry of the Interior hit back. When M. Poher decided against driving up the Champs Elysées to the Arc de Triomphe for the wreath-laying ceremonies to mark VE-Day, it was thought better that he should go up the Faubourg St. Honoré, admittedly the wrong way.

Instead of shutting the street the customary 15 minutes before the arrival of the Presidential procession, the Ministry of the Interior gave express orders that the Faubourg was to be closed a full hour before. This resulted in the most tremendous traffic jam and the blame was freely attributed to the new President.

M. Poher not only has the support of the police but, as he is the interim head of state, they are bound to follow his orders in the event of trouble.

New candidate

It was learned in Paris yesterday that there is another candidate in the presidential election. M. Gaston Daudel, a businessman of Chateaufort du Rhone, will be a Socialist candidate in protest against the increasing splits in the official Left.

M. Poher is thought to have already chosen his Prime Minister, and the most widely tipped at the moment is M. Pierre Suareau, 50, a former minister of Gen. de Gaulle, the only man to resign when the decision to hold a referendum on the election of the President by universal suffrage was taken.

As for M. Pompidou, his choice for Prime Minister would be likely to be either M. Olivier Guichard, or, more remotely, M. Chaban Delmas, President of the National Assembly.